The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today

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THE *OCCASIONAL PAPERS* SERIES

The publication program of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) has already addressed important issues in the field of Islamic thought and the Islamization of Knowledge. In this respect a number of books have already appeared in several languages under fifteen main series: *Academic Dissertations*; *Accessing the Islamic Intellectual Heritage*; *Concepts and Terminology*; *Human Development*; *Indices*; *Islamic Methodology*; *Islamization of Culture*; *Islamization of Knowledge*; *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought*; *Lectures*; *Occasional Papers*; *Perspectives on Islamic Thought*; *Reform Movements and Methodologies of Change*; *Research Monographs* and *Rasa'il Islamiyat al Ma'rifah* [Studies in the Islamization of Knowledge].

The *Occasional Papers* series, published by the Institute's London Office, covers a number of research papers, articles and lectures from the Institute's worldwide program as well as from Muslim scholars willing to make contributions. These are presented individually in the form of booklets that can be easily read or referred to. It is hoped that the booklets will reach students, scholars, and specialists as well as major sections of the world's Muslims alike in order to generate a fruitful debate on the vital issue of Islamization, and to create an awareness of the intellectual crisis in its various shapes and forms, while encouraging an active role in the proposed course of action and solution. This series is also translated into other languages.

The eighth paper in this series, *The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today*, was first published in the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (*AJISS*), Vol. 12, No. 1.

The use of Islamic terminology in transliteration is a policy of the IIIT. Some of the terms used are untranslatable, while others are so important that the Institute feels that familiarity with them is necessary for a better understanding of Islamic issues. These terms have been footnoted once or sometimes explained briefly between brackets. All those which have not yet been accepted in Anglo-Saxon dictionaries are in italic. As many of these occur

more than once, readers are advised to refer to the relevant footnotes whenever necessary.

When mentioning dates the Islamic one comes first, separated from the Gregorian one by a slash. When an Islamic date is mentioned alone, it is followed by AH.

The translation of the Qur'an used in this series is that of 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī (Amana Corporation, revised, 1989). However, we made changes to verses quoted from it whenever we deemed it necessary for the sake of elucidation and precision of meaning.

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Editors' Note

In the welter of today's philosophies, claims and counterclaims, Muslims, indeed people worldwide, are confused and disoriented. Unable to discern a clear or convincing truth about the ultimate questions that trouble their souls, many have allowed their intellectual and spiritual integrity to be swept along by the daily rush of the consumeristic traffic. Others have surrendered long-guarded psyches to the fantasies and delusions of otherworldliness and extremism. The "balance" (and the "middle course") preached by Islam is lost, except to a few.

However, being an egalitarian faith and a holistic way of life, Islam would not give the "few" the satisfaction of individual salvation in the midst of general despair or misplaced euphoria. Indeed, a mark of an "enlightened" person (and a conscientious Muslim) is the sense of empathy, even oneness and mutual dependence, a believer should have or develop within the fraternity of faith—a fraternity that should not be hermetically sealed against the larger world community with all its possibilities and challenges, as well as duty due to it.

So it is both a "religious" obligation and a free act of will to reach out for one's fellow believers and fellow human beings with whatever insight or learning one has attained or accumulated. This is to be done in a spirit of humility and with a readiness to accept other views and perspectives if proven valid and conducive to the realization of the envisaged goals and a further discernment of truth.

With this perspective in mind, the present paper marks a watershed. It has its own point of departure in the seminal and epoch-making book, *The Islamization of Knowledge*, 1982. In its time, that book was offered as a "timely" gift to an Ummah beset by calamities from within and without, an Ummah that was nevertheless aspiring to regain its balance and resume its world role. Momentous events have since taken place in the world, but the condition of the Ummah remains unchanged, in both the severity of its plight and the pressing need to rise to its destiny.

Indeed, the gravity of the Ummah's decline and the enormity of the task of salvaging its future were prime movers behind the formulation of the 1982 declaration, which, while taking a hard, cold look at the causes and manifestations of the malaise, still spiritedly urged the Ummah to rise to its destiny and reap the harvest promised for the diligent and conscientious. The note of optimism was certainly not out of place. Muslims are enjoined not to allow their psyches to be consumed by despair, however implaccable the malady might be. Besides being inimical to the very spirit of faith, despondency is likely to sap the energy needed for continual struggle and creativity, which are essential to humankind's civilizing role on earth.

Nor was that dose of optimism proven fatuous by later developments. The response to the 1982 statement and Work Plan was truly phenomenal. Many have been the seminars, conferences, studies, and publications devoted since then to the issue of the Islamization of Knowledge. The movement, constantly acquiring more insights, breadth and refinement with the passage of time and the contribution of many men and women, has now become a central issue of debate among Muslim scholars worldwide. The idiom itself has evolved from being a strange coinage to be defended, frowned upon or overhauled, to becoming a byword. By design or not, it has served as a fulcrum for a robust exchange of views, and seems destined to continue to do so.

Nevertheless, the need for a further clarification and updating of the original "manifesto" has been felt for some time. This paper sets out to do that, among other things. It shares with the 1982 formulation of principles a rational examination of the Ummah's malaise, however pervasive, and the possible solutions, however demanding in terms of effort and time. It partakes of the original declaration's belief in the immense, though largely untapped, potential of the Ummah in its fourteenth Hijra century, but it departs from the inevitable simplicities, rigidities, and polarities (East vs. West, etc.) of the original manifesto and its somewhat austere Work Plan. Trekking a path of its own, this paper offers a number of valuable insights. These are insights gained from a long engagement with Islamic as well as global issues, with

traditional as well as contemporary concerns, with work from within the social sciences and outside of them. It not only surveys the field along with the powers and challenges at work, but also charts a way out of the present impasse. More immediately, it offers an updated review of the progress of the Islamization of Knowledge project and a timely clarification of the very concept itself. Clearly, that concept, though responsible for generating a worldwide debate, even action at times, has been so often misinterpreted and/or inflated since its inception in 1982 that a need for such elucidation has been called for, and is now met.

This does not, however, mean that the task of the Islamization of Knowledge will henceforth be made crystal-clear and effortless. Rather, and as the concept of the Islamization of Knowledge advocates (and requires), there will always be new and different interpretations.

As matters now stand, the Ummah has still to make up its collective mind about which direction it ought to take. Arguments rage as to whether it should reinvoke (or clone) the past with all its pristine purity and glory or allow the tide of modernity to rush into and bail out the partly stagnant waters which have generally characterized the Muslim intellectual endeavor for the past few centuries. Obviously, the argument put forward by this paper is concerned to see the Ummah in tune with its past but working for its present and future with skill and clarity of vision. The fervent, but reasoned, appeal for the "two readings"—of both God's Book and His Cosmos—seems destined to provoke as much debate as the original slogan of the Islamization of Knowledge. Such debate must be anticipated with joy—though more is required.

The gradational nature of the Islamizing project is all too obvious, and was never far from the minds of the authors of the 1982 declaration. It would certainly have been juvenile to think otherwise. And yet there is a need now to stress, as the present paper does, the ambitious (but also imperative) nature of the enterprise. For, despite the highly commendable effort invested in further elaboration and, in some brave instances, attempted implementation of the concept, the Islamization of Knowledge

remains at an initial, some might even say, prenatal stage. Much work needs to be done, many talents galvanized and resources pooled, institutions set up or reorganized, etc., before a truly genuine and sustainable realization of the concept can be said to have begun. Such a realistic vision needs to accompany and inform every stage of the way. To be lulled into a false or premature sense of achievement is a costly setback at a time when standing idly by for a day may have serious consequences for decades to come.

Introduction

Within the "Islamization of Knowledge" school itself, the idea of the Islamization of Knowledge has always been understood as an intellectual and methodological outlook, rather than as an academic field, or specialization, or ideology, or new sect. For this reason, the school has always attempted to view issues of knowledge and methodology from the perspectives of reform, inquiry, and self-discovery, without any preconceptions, doctrinal or temporal constraints, or limitations on its intellectual horizons. The school is keenly aware of the workings of time on ideas as they pass from stage to stage and mature, and is therefore the first to point out that the Islamization of Knowledge is not to be understood as a set of axioms, or a rigid ideology, or a religious movement. Rather, in order to comprehend the full meaning of the term, it must be viewed as designating a methodology for dealing with knowledge and its sources, or as an intellectual outlook in its early stages.

Essential to the process of development are an ongoing critique and the attempt to derive particulars from the general. The initial articulation of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking and the Work Plan (1982) was therefore produced in general terms. At that early stage, the focus was on criticism of both traditional Muslim and Western methodologies, as a way of introducing the Islamization of Knowledge and explaining its significance. The first edition of the *Islamization of Knowledge* pointed out the principles essential to any attempt to fashion an Islamic paradigm of knowledge based on the world view of Islam and the unique concepts and factors that constitute it. In a very brief manner, the intellectual aspect of the Islamization of Knowledge was also addressed in that early work. Despite all that, however, the work was directed toward the practical aspects of producing textbooks for use in teaching the social sciences, as this was considered the priority at a time when the Ummah was losing its best minds to the West and the Western cultural and intellectual invasion. Accordingly, twelve steps were identified as the basis from which the preparation of introductory texts in the social sciences might proceed.

The Work Plan and the principles elaborated in the first edition of the *Islamization of Knowledge* were met with a great deal of enthusiasm, as these represented a novel intellectual endeavor. There was wide acceptance for the new ideas, and many scholars were quick to endorse them. Indeed, the popularity and appeal of the Islamization of Knowledge were such that several academic institutions immediately attempted to give practical form to its concepts. Some people, however, were unable to discern the essential methodological issues in the Islamization of Knowledge, perhaps owing to the pragmatic manner in which "Islamization" was first articulated, so that they considered it little more than a naive attempt to replace "knowledge" with knowledge that had somehow been "Islamized." For this reason, there were those who criticized the undertaking in the ways that they did. Nor was the undertaking spared the criticism of those who meant only to ridicule it, or those whose habit it was to interpret everything they read in terms of their own preconceived notions. Some people went so far as to suppose the Islamization of Knowledge to be an attempt on the part of Islamic fundamentalists to somehow transform culture and the world of ideas into tools for the attainment of political power. Undoubtedly, it was this view which led some people to consider the Islamization of Knowledge an ideological discourse rather than an epistemological or methodological one.

Likewise, those who are captivated by contemporary Western knowledge and suppose everything it produces to be scientifically objective and universally applicable assumed that the Islamization of Knowledge was symptomatic of the state of conscious or unconscious denial of the "other." To their way of thinking, the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking reflected an attitude of self-affirmation through the attempt to characterize everything of significance as "Islamic." Some of them saw it as a manifestation of the desire on the part of "Islamists" to control everything in the state and society, including worldly knowledge, or the social sciences and humanities in particular, by making scholarship and academia their exclusive domain, and stripping from the Marxists, leftists, and secularists in the Arab and Islamic Worlds the right to practice their scholarship, or, at the very least, to speak with

authority on anything to do with Islam or Muslim society. The fact of the matter, however, is that none of this ever occurred to any of those participating in the beginning of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking.[1] In fact, no mention of any of these matters has ever been made in any of the literature produced by the school.

The Islamization of Knowledge school is not blind to the fact that it may take decades before the methodological and epistemological issues covered by this proposition are clarified in any definitive manner. Indeed, these matters are not the sort that can be outlined in a declaration of principles, or a press release, or a party manifesto. They should instead be understood as landmarks on the road to the sort of learning which may assist in reforming the Muslim mind, so that the Ummah may address its own crisis of thought and participate actively in the attempt to deal with the crises of thought affecting the rest of the world. Moreover, those concerned with the Islamization of Knowledge realize that intellectual undertakings, especially at this level, represent the most difficult and complex of a society's activities, and that these may require decades, if not generations, before they come to fruition. Even then, they rarely come to an end for knowledge is limitless, and Allah's creation is greater. Moreover, for every learned person there is one who is more learned. Anyway, the essence of knowledge and its foundation is method, in the general sense of the term. This is why the message of Islam is said to be a complete way of life, rather than a specific set of guidelines, except as regards the fundamentals which are

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1. The Islamization of Knowledge, as understood by the International Institute of Islamic Thought, is a systematic methodological concept which the Institute, its branches, and representatives are attempting to develop and realize in practical terms. It appears, however, that the concept in general is one which has appealed to several different quarters and that these, in turn, have produced in its name (or in similar names they have chosen either with or without care) whatever they have produced. The Institute in no way considers itself responsible for the work done by these quarters, or for their views. In fact, the work they have produced fails to express the issue in terms of the methodology and comprehensiveness that characterize the Institute's concern with it as evinced by its literature and publications.

unchanging and unaffected by the differences of time and place. As such, these specifics are relatively very few.[2]

When the scholars of our school of thought attempt to define the Islamization of Knowledge they do so in general terms only, rather than attempt to produce a strictly "inclusive and exclusive" definition in the classical manner. In fact, the Islamization of Knowledge should be understood as a loose designation calculated to convey the general sense of the undertaking and its priorities. Take, for example, the definition proposed by Dr. 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl, who wrote:

> The Islamization of Knowledge means involvement in intellectual pursuits, by examination, summarization, correlation, and publication, from the perspective of an Islamic outlook on life, man, and the universe.[3]

Abū al Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād wrote:

> The Islamization of Knowledge is the breaking of the connection between the scientific achievements of human civilization and the transmutations of postulative philosophy, so that science may be employed by means of a methodological order which is religious rather than speculative in nature.[4]

He also defined Islamization of Knowledge as:

> ...the Islamization of applied science and of scientific principles as well. This may be accomplished through an understanding of the similarities between the principles of the natural sciences and those of nature itself. This, in fact, is the foundation upon which all religious values are based. Therefore, the philosophical references in scientific theories may become "Islamized" when they negate the postulative aspect of those theories and recast them in terms of the natural or the universal, which carries with

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2. These include matters like the pillars of faith, the prescribed duties, the acts of worship, the prohibited acts and substances, or the things referred to by certain scholars as being "known to be an essential part of Islam."
3. 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl, *Madkhal ilā Islāmiyyat al Ma'rifah* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991), 15.
4. Abū al Qāsim Ḥajj Ḥammād, *Manhajiyat al Qur'ān al Ma'rifiyah* (Herndon, VA: IIIT, 1991), 19, internal publication.

it the notion of a divine purpose to all existence and movement.[5]

Thus, Abū al Qāsim, like all the other scholars concerned with the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking, emphasizes that it is not a cosmetic addition of religious terminology and sentiment to studies in the social sciences and humanities, or the grafting of relevant verses from the Qur'an onto the sciences or disciplines intended for "Islamization." On the contrary, the Islamization of Knowledge may be viewed as a methodological and epistemological rearrangement of the sciences and their principles. It is likewise not to be understood as a blanket extension of personal conviction to all of the disciplines in an attempt to lend a sort of religious legitimacy to the accomplishments of human civilization, nor should it be understood as a negation of those achievements by the logic of empty semantics.

Rather, these definitions have been proposed for the purpose of lending clarity to the issue and describing its characteristics and distinguishing traits. These were never intended to be precise delineations in the classical mold. In fact, we prefer that the Islamization of Knowledge not be limited to the confines of a hard and fast definition. After all, the Islamization of Knowledge is the foundation of the *tawḥīdī* episteme which holds that the universe has a Creator who is One, Unique, the Originator of all things and their Provider, Observing yet Unobserved, Subtle and All-Knowing, Unfathomable and beyond human comprehension; He has charged humanity with His stewardship and taught them what they knew not, making revelation a principal source of knowledge and likewise the natural world, so that by means of reading the two within a framework of pure *tawḥīd*, proper, discerning, and purposeful knowledge may result.

Therefore, when we present our ideas on the issue and attempt to formulate principles, we do so with the logic that our proposals are no more than landmarks or indicators for the benefit of scholars interested in producing academic work from an Islamization of Knowledge perspective. These first steps have

5. Ibid.

come about as the result of a variety of experiences in dealing with the practical and theoretical aspects of the Islamization of Knowledge. Undoubtedly, as researchers continue to work with these indicators, or with any of the six discourses explained later in this paper, they will further clarify the issue, postulate its principles, and test its intellectual and academic efficacy.

The Reality and Importance of the Islamization of Knowledge

The Islamization of Knowledge represents the intellectual and epistemological side of Islam which began with the Patriarch, Ibrahim, upon him be peace, and was completed by the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (ṢAAS)[6]. Indeed, the final revelation began with the words, "Read..." and ended with the verse, "Today, I have completed your religion for you..." The epistemological aspect of Islam was first evinced in the revelation of the following verses of the Qur'an:

> Read! In the name of your Lord who created, created humans from a clot. Read! For your Lord is Most Bountiful, He who taught by the pen, taught humans what they did not know. (96:1-5)

And then in the revelation of the opening verses of *Sūrat al Qalam*:

> *Nūn*! By the pen and what they write... (68:1-2)

Followed by the opening verses of *Sūrat al Raḥmān*:

> The All Merciful! [Who] taught the Qur'an, created humankind, and taught them expression.... (55:1-3)

From the above verses it may be deduced that humankind has been commanded to undertake two different kinds of readings, and

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6. ṢAAS—*Ṣalla Allāhu 'Alayhi wa Sallam*: May the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him; said whenever the name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned, or whenever he is referred to as the Prophet of God.

to understand its situation in the universe from an understanding of how the two complement one another. The first of these readings is the Book of Allah's revelation, and the second is the book of His creation. Now, the Book of Allah's final revelation is the Qur'an, the Noble Recitation in which all matters of religious significance are explained (Qur'an 12:111) and the book of creation is the natural universe from which nothing has been omitted (Qur'an 6:38). To undertake a reading of either of these two books without reference to the other will avail humanity nothing at all, nor will it lead to the sort of comprehensive knowledge necessary to the building and maintenance of civilized society, or to knowledge worthy of preservation and further development or exchange among the civilized peoples of the world. In fact, such a one-sided reading will never enable humankind to fulfill its role as the stewards of Allah (*istikhlāf*), or the keepers of His trust (*amānah*). Of course, if that does not happen, then humanity will never be united in faith, nor will it be guided. Likewise, the divine purpose in creation will never be realized. Never will the earth be united in worshipping Allah. Never will the stars join the rest of creation in bowing to His will and saying His praises.

> There is not a thing but celebrates His praise: and yet you do not understand how they declare His glory. (Qur'an 17:44)

Indeed, whenever any sort of disruption occurs in any aspect of human life it serves to indicate imbalances in the way the readings were undertaken; perhaps only one reading was undertaken, or perhaps the two were not done together, or perhaps there was a preponderance in the scales by which matters are measured, or maybe the wrong methods were used.

> To each among you have We prescribed a law and a way. (Qur'an 5:48)

Under such circumstances nothing will begin to go right unless and until equilibrium has been reestablished, and the only way to restore it is by a balanced and complementary reading of the two books. Clearly, each of the two readings must be considered an epistemological fundament and a creative source that may not be ignored. It is impossible that a discerning and sound society could

exist without joining these two readings and integrating them in a comprehensive manner. This is because a society which ignores the first reading, the Book of Revelation, preferring instead to immerse itself in the second, the book of the real-existential, will lose sight of its relationship to the Almighty, and its responsibilities of stewardship or *istikhlāf*, trust or *amānah*, and accountability to a higher authority. The result of this negligence is that society grows self-centered and overweening, believing itself independent and free of the Unseen. Such a society will inevitably set out to spin for itself a web of speculative philosophy which is ultimately incapable of enabling it to attain true knowledge. On the contrary, such knowledge will lead the people of such a society, under the best circumstances, to become like,

> ...those who know but the outer aspects of worldly life, but who, in regard to the afterlife, are very negligent. (Qur'an 30:7)

The philosophies produced by such societies are powerless to answer the "ultimate questions," and generally dismiss everything beyond their abilities to perceive by means of the senses as "supernatural." Such philosophies are also prone to suggesting utterly baseless replies to these questions, leaving people to wander and stray. Even in regard to the Almighty Creator, people nourished on such philosophies think of Him as just another element of the supernatural. If He did actually create the universe, so their "reading" goes, He did so all at once and then forgot, or ignored, whatever He had created, leaving it to act and react mechanically in accordance with previously established natural laws. This type of reading, even if undertaken by people who think themselves religious, will never on its own lead to knowledge of Allah, the One, All-Powerful, and Unparalleled Creator. Rather, if such people believe at all, they believe in a god who is the way they want "him" to be, often equating "him" with the powers of nature itself. Such faith is generally of the sort which jumbles doctrines of incarnation with *shirk* and idolatry, and often leads to theories, like dialectical materialism, which end up denying the existence of any sort of creator or to those, like the theories of natural selection and evolution, which are both unacceptable and inadequate as alternatives to belief in the Almighty.

Within the framework of such a one-sided reading of the natural universe the world may assume the form of mutually opposed powers. As the result of the distorted picture emerging from such an incomplete reading, individuals may suppose themselves divine and answerable to no one but themselves. Such individuals, supposing with their limited knowledge and understanding that they are in control of their surroundings, will worship themselves, make their desires their guides, and attempt to derive their values from nature. Religion for such individuals becomes no more than something to be used when the need arises, to fill a psychological gap, or to fulfill a subliminal desire.

> Nay, but man transgresses all bounds when he looks upon himself as self-sufficient. (Qur'an 96:6-7)

When man becomes so presumptuous, he becomes overbearing and tyrannical with the result that he destroys the environment by polluting the land, sea, and air by means of his own hands. When the natural order is disrupted, the earth becomes overspread by the diseases of excess and perversion. Entire continents become enveloped by hunger, destitution, pestilence, and destruction, so that the majority of inhabitants must live in misery.

> Those who turn from remembering Me shall live lives of misery. (Qur'an 20:124)

It may happen that the second reading, the reading of the real-existential, is ignored by those undertaking the first reading, that of revelation. When this happens, great imbalances result. Sometimes these take the form of aversion to the world and worldly pursuits, so that people become ascetics and lose the ability to participate in and contribute to society, and fail to undertake their responsibilities as stewards and keepers of Allah's trust. In other instances, such a loss of equilibrium will leave people incapable of independent and creative thinking. When people begin to believe that humans are not really capable of independent actions, they no longer value their own deeds and, ultimately, conclude that there is no meaning to their existence. All such notions are, of course, in complete contradiction of the teachings of the Qur'an and the way of the Prophet.

To neglect the reading of the natural universe or to fail to balance and complement it with the reading of revelation will often lead to confusion in regard to important issues of faith. Often, those who read only the Book of Revelation suppose that true elimination of anthropomorphic elements from the concept of deity requires negation of the value of human actions, rejection of the belief in free will, and a mystical denial of the positive role fashioned by the Almighty for humankind. Anyone who reads the writings of people who hold such notions, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, will find that they are thoroughly confused about what constitutes human as opposed to divine deeds, about the meanings of free will and predetermination, and about issues of cause and effect, and others.

In conclusion, there can be no escaping the matter of combining the two readings; that of revelation and that of the natural universe. For if these two are not allowed to complement one another, the result is certain to be an imbalanced understanding of reality. This is why the Islamization of Knowledge is such an epistemological and civilizational necessity not only for Muslims but also for all of humankind, and may be considered a solution to the worldwide crisis of contemporary thought. With the adoption in the West of rationalism as the basis for thought, Western civilization found itself confronted with the problem of defining methodologies in ways that were based on its own scientific progress. Marxism, for example, was one such attempt at fashioning a Western, scientific methodology that was based on dialectical materialism. Clearly, however, neither Marxism nor any of the other liberal, positivistic, or secular Western schools of thought have been able to provide the answers to the issues which beset Western society and the rest of the contemporary world.

For Muslims the crisis is especially vexatious. By virtue of our submission to Western intellectual, cultural, and institutional influences and the impact these have had on our lives, we are now full partners in the worldwide crisis. Our relationship with the West is no longer, as some continue to believe, a marginal one. Rather, we and the rest of the world have accepted the West's methodology, world view, and perspectives on history, science,

knowledge, culture, progress, and so on. What, then, is this Islamization of Knowledge proposal? What solutions does it offer to the crises of thought which presently plague the world? And how may these solutions be brought about?

The Islamization of Knowledge may be brought about, as indicated earlier, by the combined readings of the two books and the establishment, on the basis of their similarity and complementarity, of a methodology for research and discovery. Indeed, the Qur'an, like the natural universe, bespeaks and directs toward the other. In other words, the Qur'an is a guide to the real-existential, and the real-existential is a guide to the Qur'an. Moreover, true knowledge may not be attained except by means of a complementary reading of these two sources. This is what is referred to as "combining the two readings." One reading is a reading of the Unseen, in which revelation is accompanied by interpretation and the attempt to discover its universals and the ways these manifest themselves in nature; while the other is an objective reading of the real-existential in the light of the universals expounded in the verses of revelation. The reason for reading revelation, then, is to settle from the general to the particular, and to link the absolute to the specific, to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow. The reading of the categorical real-existent represents an ascent from the specific and particular toward the general and absolute, to the extent that relative human rational abilities allow. In this way, the supposed differences between the teachings of revelation and the objective truths of the natural universe may be seen as nonexistent. This is emphasized in the first few verses of *Surat al 'Alaq* quoted above.

When, however, these two readings are undertaken separately, the results may be perilous. Those who rely solely upon the reading of revelation, ignoring knowledge of the real world, will transform religion into something mystical which accords no value to either humankind or nature, rejects cause and effect, and ignores the usages of society, history, psychology, and economics. Ultimately, the result of such a reading is that thought becomes rigid and inflexible, and ignores the elements of time and history. Quite often, this approach is thought to be a "religious" approach,

when in fact it has nothing to do with religion.

Those who undertake only the second reading are actually rejecting the unseen presence of the Creator and Manager of the natural universe. Either that, or they ignore it, so that they gradually arrive at a positivistic understanding of knowledge which, in turn, influences the makeup of society in the negative manner we witness in contemporary Western civilization where all notions of anything being sacred have been stripped away, where everything is deconstructed and reduced to its minimum. It is for this reason that Western society often views existence itself as a worthless commodity. This further explains the West's preoccupation with "ends" like the "end of history" or the "end of civilization," or progress, or modernity, or humanity.

Thus, humanity is divided between mysticism and positivism, even though the first of the Qur'anic revelations clearly refutes the mystical, in the Western sense of the term, as being a part of the Unseen, *al ghayb*. In fact, the first verses clarify the link between the Unseen and the second reading or the objective reading of the real-existential which is recorded by means of the pen. These same verses, when they link the real-existential to revelation, reject the speculative "ends" which result from the one-sided reading of the real-existential. So the right and true reader is the human whose faith in, and understanding of revelation on the one hand, and whose understanding of the real-existent and the principles which determine and govern categorical real-existents on the other, qualify him/her for the responsibilities of stewardship.

It is impossible to estimate, in terms of human suffering, the damage caused to modern society by the rift between science and religion that has been allowed to occur in its educational institutions and curriculum. Yet, even so, humanity has shown little interest in the endeavor to prepare students grounded in both. Obviously, the reason for this is that modern society has adopted the Western attitude of separating the two, so that students of theology attend seminaries and the like, and students of science attend colleges of engineering, and so on. In the Muslim World, where Western influence is all-pervasive, the same rift exists

between schools and colleges of Shari'ah and theology and colleges of practical and applied sciences, or social sciences and the humanities.

The very same attitude of separation is responsible for the rift between religious values and contemporary knowledge. For us, as Muslims, this attitude is perilous for the reason that it drives a wedge between the sciences of the Shar'iah and the social sciences which have been developed, for the most part, in accordance with a one-sided reading of the real-existential. The sciences of the Shari'ah, for their part, have contented themselves with descriptive and lexical studies of the texts of revelation (the Qur'an and the Sunnah), while largely ignoring the real-existents of societal phenomena and their spatiotemporal effects.

The dominant Western cultural paradigm has cast the social sciences and humanities in a positivistic mold that excludes the axiological verities of revelation. This narrow paradigm is responsible for drawing humankind into a debate over the conflicting dualities of mysticism and positivism, inflating in the process the place of the self at the expense of religious and ethical values. This, in turn, led to the spread of individual liberalism and the social and communal turmoil in which it has resulted.

The Islamization of Knowledge is primarily a methodological issue which is prepositioned on the identification and articulation of the relationship between revelation and the real-existential. In its essence, that relationship is one of integration and permeation which clarifies the comprehensive manner in which the Qur'an deals with the real-existential and the natural laws (*sunan*) and principles which govern and regulate it. Indeed, knowledge of those *sunan* is invaluable to an understanding of the principles of Qur'anic methodology. To summarize, then, this undertaking, the Islamization of Knowledge, may not be pursued except by those endowed with vast knowledge of the Qur'an and, with it, a firm grounding in the social sciences and humanities.

The Six Discourses

In what follows, a brief description will be given of each of the six discourses which form the present focus of attention for the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking.

The First Discourse: Articulating the Islamic Paradigm of Knowledge

This discourse is concerned with identifying and erecting a *tawḥīd*-based system of knowledge, a *tawḥīdī* episteme that is based on two fundaments. The first fundament entails the conceptual activation of the articles of faith and their transformation into a creative and dynamic intellectual power capable of presenting adequate replies to what are known as the "ultimate questions." This may take place through a perceptive understanding of theology and the elements of its methodology. What, for example, is the benefit, at an epistemological level, of faith in Allah? In His angels, books, and prophets? Or in the Day of Judgment? What is the methodological significance of these articles?

All ideas, in fact, all sciences and all civilizations are based on a particular world view or understanding of its beginnings, ends and principal elements, whether seen or unseen. Thus, the rejection of a Creator, or the adoption of a position of neutrality on whether or not a Creator exists, or rejection of any of the other articles of faith presupposes a world view that is entirely different from that of the believer. Thus, while the Muslim mind is generally content to consider the articles of faith matters of personal conviction which in no way reflect on, or influence, anything related to methodological or intellectual issues, the Islamization of Knowledge outlook, in keeping with the higher purposes of the Shari'ah and the character of Islamic teachings, is based on the notion that these represent the foundations of the societal and epistemological paradigm sought by Islam. At the same time, it should be clear that no society or reformation of society may take place without an epistemological and

methodological basis. Indeed, whatever Islam has accomplished has been based on its unique vision of things like the unseen, the universe, life, and the rest of the belief system which is at the base of that world view.

The second fundament of the Islamic or *tawḥīdī* episteme is the elaboration of the paradigms of knowledge which guided historical Islam and its schools of thought, legal, philosophical, and other. This must be done in order to link those with the intellectual output of the past, and to evaluate the extent to which they contributed to the dynamism and comprehensiveness of that output. Such an elaboration will also assist in defining the relationship between those paradigms and the various intellectual trends and crises faced by the Ummah at different periods in its history. A further benefit of such an elaboration will be to determine the extent to which those paradigms influenced the development or decline of thought in those periods. An effort must also be undertaken to discover and clarify how limited or partial epistemic systems drew from the comprehensive *tawḥīdī* episteme mentioned above. The advantage of such a clarification will be its facilitating an introduction to the feasibility of developing partial systems for the various social and applied sciences based on *tawḥīd* and a complementary reading of the two books, while borrowing from the paradigms which prevailed in the Islamic past and those developed by Western and contemporary thought.

The Second Discourse: Developing Qur'anic Methodology

The methodological shortcomings presently besetting the Muslim mind make the reconstruction of that mind through the development of new methodology an absolute necessity. While Qur'anic methodology may spring from the *tawḥīdī* episteme and have as its basis the premises and principles of that episteme, its prolonged disuse makes the effort required for its activation more akin to discovery than to recovery. Qur'anic methodology will enable the Muslim mind to deal effectively with its historical and contemporary problems for the reason that methodology is a means of attaining truth, and a way to understand and analyze

phenomena. In addition to its link to methodology, a paradigm will have at its foundation what Professor Mahmud Muhammad Shakir called the "pre-methodological," which, he explained, covers matters like culture, language, and psychological and intellectual disposition. The composition of methodology, furthermore, includes philosophy and tools. The philosophical element springs from the epistemic, theological, and cultural paradigms, and the same is true of methodological tools. In spite of Suyuti's legal maxim which states: "that which may not be forgiven if it were an end, may be forgiven as a means," the means for dealing with phenomena, or the tools used for research, while they may not appear at first to be subject to cultural or religious considerations, the fact is that they are never completely free of those considerations. Therefore, the advancement of Islamic methodology will proceed from its seeking to establish its own philosophical foundations and to discover appropriate methodological tools that accord with those foundations. Certainly, the landmarks of such a methodology will be derived from the religious and cultural premises of the *tawḥīdī* episteme.

The structure of Islamic methodology in general, or what may be termed the foundations of that methodology, must be grounded in authentic scholarship rather than the attempt to be different simply by opposing contemporary Western methodology. In fact, the purpose behind developing Islamic methodology should be the achievement of harmony between the elements of the Islamic paradigm of knowledge, regardless of any notions of rapprochement, or comparison, or confrontation, or imitation, or whatever. In addition, such an undertaking should aim at enabling the Muslim mind, by integrative methodology, to practice ijtihad and be intellectually creative. Certainly, the construction of this methodology should be accounted a major priority and an essential precondition to the four discourses which follow, in the same way that the previous discourse should be considered an essential precondition to this discourse.

The Third Discourse: Methodology for Dealing with the Qur'an

Methodology for dealing with the Qur'an may be considered the third pillar on which the issue of the Islamization of Knowledge stands. Development of such methodology may require a review and reorganization of the Qur'anic sciences, even to the extent of discarding some of the traditional areas of study which played a role in the past. The Arab of the past understood the Qur'an from within the special characteristics of his simple and limited social and intellectual nature. Clearly, these stand in stark contrast to the nature of contemporary civilization. At the stage in history when the revelational sciences were first formalized, sciences which revolved in the main around the texts of the Qur'an and the *aḥādīth*, the dominant mentality among Islamic scholars was descriptive in nature, so that their concern was with the analysis of texts from primarily lexical and rhetorical Islamic perspectives. Thus, at that period in Islamic intellectual history, the Qur'an was understood in terms of that sort of *tafsīr* or interpretative discourse.

At the present time, however, the dominant mentality is that of a methodological understanding of issues from disciplined research, employing criticism and analysis, into topics of significance for society and their various relationships. All of this makes a necessity of the reconsideration, by Muslims, of the disciplined means by which they are to interpret the texts of revelation and read the books of both revelation and the real-existential. The Qur'an, furthermore, is in need of liberation from the sort of interpretation which neglects the dimensions of its absoluteness, its verification of previous revelations, and its safeguarding them. Indeed, such interpretations have ever been susceptible to the relative, either in the form of stories and narratives founded in the Talmudic tradition and then adapted, in a variety of manners, to fit Qur'anic situations, or as narrations concerning the specific events which occasioned the revelation of Qur'anic verses. This link to the relative did not stop at qualifying general terms by means of specific occasions, but went beyond this to the point of linking the Qur'anic revelation to a

specific spatiotemporal framework; all of which is clearly contrary to the universality of Islam, the finality of the Prophet's mission, and the sovereignty of the Qur'an; all of which require the Qur'anic text to be absolute and unqualified in its appeal to the Muslim mind of every time and place. Indeed, the Qur'an will forever remain rich in content, so that its wonders will never cease, its recitation will ever remain fresh, and it will continue to challenge the ability of humankind to fully comprehend it, until finally Allah inherits the earth and all that inhabits it.

The Qur'an, as "the explanation of all things" and "guidance, mercy, and good tidings for the Muslims" (16:89) is the only originating source in Islam, whereas the Sunnah is an explanatory source which serves to further elaborate on the meaning of what was revealed to humankind in the Qur'an. Moreover, the Almighty has pledged to preserve the Qur'anic revelation and to clarify its meanings.

> Verily, We shall bring it together and recite it. Then, when We recite it, follow its recitation. Thereafter, shall We be responsible for its explanation. (75:17-19)

No other source of knowledge, culture, or civilization on earth, other than the Qur'an, is protected by the Almighty, or surrounded by so many divine pledges. Thus, the Qur'anic text is guaranteed against alteration and distortion; its authority is complete and its sovereignty absolute.

> Whatever matter you differ over, its ultimate disposition is with Allah. (Qur'an 42:10)

This is why the reconstruction of methodology for dealing with the Qur'an as a methodological source of knowledge for the natural and social sciences will have the effect of empowering these sciences to contribute effectively to human life and the crises with which it is confronted at present. Such an undertaking is, moreover, certain to return values to the balance of these sciences and to link them to the higher purposes for which creation was intended by its Creator.

The Fourth Discourse: Methodology for Dealing with the Sunnah

Construction of a methodology for dealing with the Sunnah of the Prophet constitutes the fourth discourse in the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking. As the major source for clarification and explanation of the Qur'anic text, the nature and the role of the Sunnah must be thoroughly understood. Without the Sunnah, it would be impossible to elaborate on the methods or the lore required for making significant contributions to human society; or to be able to apply Qur'anic values to real-existent situations. The period of prophethood and the time of the Companions represented a stage in which direct contact with the Messenger of Allah was possible. This resulted in the ability of Muslims to know and emulate whatever he said or did. He said: "Take the rites of hajj[7] from me..."[8] for example, and "Perform *ṣalāh*[9] as you see me perform it..." Emulation and compliance depend upon practical action, and when that is present no difficulties will arise in regard to application. Thus, the Prophet's deeds and words served to narrow the distance between the hidden wisdom of the Qur'anic way and the existential, although they did so in terms of the particular mental, linguistic, and intellectual abilities of the people he addressed. These matters were then transmitted, to the best of their ability to do so, by the narrators of *aḥādīth* whose only concern was to ensure the preservation of the Prophet's every word and deed, as these represented the methodology by which disputes could be solved by means of revelation. This explains the incredible magnitude of the Sunnah which allows us to follow the Prophet in his daily actions, whether at home or away, at war or at peace, as a teacher, a judge, a leader, or a simple human being. The Sunnah further affords us the opportunity to witness and

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7. hajj: The fifth pillar of Islam consisting of acts performed at Makkah on the ninth and tenth days of Dhu al Ḥijjah, the last month of the Islamic lunar year.
8. This was related by Imām Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, III, 218 on the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh.
9. *ṣalāh* (pl. *ṣalawāt*): The supreme act of worship in Islam, inadequately translated as "prayer." Basically there are five appointed ritual *ṣalawāt*; but a person can—and does—perform voluntary ones.

interpret the way the Prophet went about dealing with the Qur'an and the real-existential, and how he combined the two.

In addition, the Sunnah reveals the characteristics of the reality with which the Prophet had to deal. Obviously, that reality differed considerably from that in which we live at present. It is this realization which leads us to construct a methodology based on how the Prophet applied the teachings of revelation to real situations, rather than one based on imitation springing from deference or *taqlīd*. In other words, the way of true emulation is quite other than the way of *taqlīd*.

The Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah represents the embodiment of methodology for applying the Qur'an to the real-existential. It is not an easy matter to be able to make sense of many of the issues brought up by the Sunnah unless one has an understanding of the circumstances at the time and place in which the Prophet lived. It is equally as difficult to follow the Sunnah or emulate the Prophet's example, in their particulars, without first constructing a methodology for emulation which objectively systematizes the Sunnah by placing its particulars within a methodological framework. For instance, even though the Prophet prohibited sculpture and the graphic representation of the human form, characterizing portrait artists as the most severely punished on the Day of Judgment, this should not be taken as the basis of a position toward the entire realm of aesthetics. Such a position would clash outright with the Qur'anic teachings about how the prophet Sulayman understood the matter; for the Qur'an records that he recruited the jinn to produce all manner of sculpture for him. Contemporary debates on the subject will never be resolved by recourse to historical particulars, nor will such recourse answer those who maintain that they feel no inclination to worship pictures and question why, then, there should be a prohibition on representing the human form. Certainly, particularized *fatāwā* or legal *responsua* which permit one sort of picture while prohibiting another will avail nothing. Rather, what is required is a methodology which takes into account things like the Prophet's statement, made on several occasions: "Had your tribe not been only recently involved in idolatry, I might have done... this or

that."[10] At the time, the circumstances were such that the Messenger of Allah was attempting to abolish idolatry among a people for whom it had become a way of life by replacing it with the simplest and purest form of *tawḥīd*.

Clearly, then, what is required is a systematic methodology capable of regulating these issues and reading them in a disciplined manner, so that the Sunnah may be dealt with methodically and not merely as a collection of particularized responses to specific questions and circumstances, which all too often are transformed by the litigious into conflicting statements, much as if they were legal opinions voiced by different *a'immah*.

During the period of Qur'anic revelation, the Arabs embraced the concept of emulation by taking the Prophet as their exemplar and the one who embodied for them a certain way of life, in accordance with their conditions and spatiotemporal circumstances. It was within this particular framework that the concepts of *ma'thūr* and *manqūl* originated, and the narration of *aḥādīth* continued in the following periods without reference to the circumstances or situations which occasioned the events they recounted, or to any of the other elements that would contribute to a comprehensive understanding of their true import. In general, *aḥādīth* were treated in the same way as the texts of the Qur'an itself, where lexical considerations were given the greatest priority. In an attempt to diminish the effects of this approach and escape the confines of the strictly *ma'thūr*, there were those who had recourse to esoteric or symbolic interpretations. These, however, served only to further exacerbate and confuse the situation. What was really required was the construction of systematic methodology for dealing with the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah so that the particulars of those texts might be considered from a comprehensive methodological perspective and in the light of Islam's higher aims and purposes.

The intellectual mentality is one that searches constantly for a

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10. This was related by al Nasā'ī in his *Sunan*, the "Book of Zakah," hadith no. 900, on the authority of 'Ā'isha.

scientific ordering of issues and attempts to bring about a methodology for dealing with all aspects of those issues. Then, within a methodological framework, analysis, criticism and interpretation assume a more comprehensive and penetrating role in dealing with universal and particularized phenomena. Such methodology, while allowing for consideration of the higher purposes of the Qur'an, will also liberate research from the confines of *taqlīd*, esotericisms, and attempts to graft applications from the past to present-day situations. Old solutions in new guises are still old solutions and will never bring about the sort of reform that is needed, or serve the higher purposes of Islam's universal message.

The Fifth Discourse: Reexamining the Islamic Intellectual Heritage

Renewed attention must be given to the Islamic intellectual heritage in order that it may be understood critically, analytically, and in a way that delivers us from the three spheres which commonly influence our dealings with this heritage. These are the spheres of total rejection, total acceptance, and arbitrary borrowing. These three spheres represent obstacles not only in the present, but for the future as well. A critical and methodologically sound reexamination of this heritage should suffice to find a way out of these three spheres and to place in effect a system in which the Islamic paradigm and its methodology may deal capably with issues of the heritage which, though they may not themselves be the focus of study, may yet shed light on how the Muslim mind has dealt with social and other phenomena in the past and, therefore, on how that mind may deal with contemporary phenomena. The intellectual heritage of Islam is the product of the human mind and is therefore subject to the relative considerations of the when, where, and who of its origins. Even so, the links of that heritage to revelation, itself above all such relative considerations, make the intellectual heritage of Islam closer to the truth than those intellectual traditions which spring from sources other than revelation. Finally, however, it will be necessary to understand our intellectual heritage as ideas, treatments, and

interpretations of a historical reality that differed markedly from our own. In our reexamination of that heritage we must attempt to discern the objectives it sought to serve, and then to evaluate the methods used, if not the solutions suggested, for their usefulness in our own time and place.

The Sixth Discourse: Dealing with the Western Intellectual Heritage

If the Muslim mind is to liberate itself from the dominant paradigm and the ways in which it deals with that paradigm, it must construct a methodology for dealing with Western thought, past and present. Neither outright rejection nor wholesale acceptance of that paradigm will avail Muslims anything. Likewise, the cosmetic grafting of elements without reference to any sort of systematic methodology, or to differences in society and culture, will contribute nothing to learning or to humanity.

The Islamization of Knowledge Undertaking

These are the steps or, more specifically, the six discourses from which the concept of the Islamization of Knowledge may proceed. At present we find ourselves confronted by an ubiquitous positivism which, in the name of scientific research and progress, promotes the notion that science may be served by breaking the relationship between the created and its Creator. This is accomplished in part by the proposal of ideas about existence which seem to conflict with much of our Islamic thinking. In fact, these ideas may or may not actually be inconsistent with Islamic teachings or principles. Yet, the issue is not that we should search our religious teachings for matters that seem to agree with such ideas, solely for the purpose of being able to say, "we already knew about that." Nor should we summarily reject such ideas and account them disbelief, *kufr*. In principle, the position of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking toward the natural sciences is anything but ecclesiastical. Yet, neither are we required to follow the examples of others. Indeed, their experience in dealing

with knowledge and progress differs considerably from our own. Were the Qur'an to be considered theology and no more, then only one reading of it would be permitted, the first reading. Yet, the Almighty has commanded that we undertake two readings. This is why we are not interested in disputing science; for we realize that the revelational truths in the verses, *āyāt*, of Allah's Book are the same truths that may be found in the signs, *āyāt*, of Allah's creation. Then, if ever misconceptions, supposedly based on scientific principles, should appear, our duty is to reexamine or exonerate those principles. This, in fact, is the basis of the concept of the two readings. In the past, religion has been challenged by purely rational and positivistic thought. Yet, it never sought to defend itself by means of the practical and applied sciences and the different theoretical schools which supported them. Thus, we—as a nation charged with guiding humankind—must reexamine science in order to deliver it from the clutches of mistaken theories and cleanse it of their influence, so that science may be put to good use and regulated by the logic of the two readings.

The undertaking which we, as Muslim social scientists, advocate is a noble one, even if some have supposed it to fall within the specific geographical and religious framework of Islam. In today's world we are a part of the reaction against the invasion of the experimental and applied sciences, in much the same way as our predecessors in the past two centuries reacted against the cultural invasion of the West and its emphasis on pure reason. Today's confrontation, however, is with an experimental, positivistic mentality which has rearranged all the natural and social sciences. Thus, we may adopt either feeble dogmatic positions or positions based on the Islamization of Knowledge which seeks to orient and direct the natural sciences in accordance with a comprehensive Qur'anic outlook on the natural universe, and, at the same time, to reconstruct the natural and social sciences in consonance with that outlook. In fact, most of the experimental sciences continue in their approaches to be qualified by the particular, rather than be characterized by dimensions of the universal. The universal dimension, however, is one that is embodied by the Qur'anic revelation:

> Verily those who dispute over the signs of Allah without His vouchsafing them authority, those are the ones whose breasts are filled with naught but pride; and never will they attain what they wish. So seek refuge in Allah, the All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Verily, the creation of the heavens and earth was greater than the creation of humankind. Yet, most of humankind know not. (40:56)

The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking is both universal and Qur'anic. In the face of impetuous religiosity and the failure of modern civilization, the Qur'an alone stands out as the one qualified to direct a comprehensive methodological and intellectual undertaking capable of continued contribution to knowledge and society. The present battle of civilizations represents a trial for us in our understanding of Qur'anic methodology and our ability to safeguard society by means of its application to the various social sciences. Then, with the complementarity of the two readings, the element of balance may be restored to science, the social sciences, and society. Today, science has arrived at a stage where phenomena may be reduced to infinitesimally minute or increased to galactically expansive proportions. Phenomena may no longer, then, be understood in the same way it was understood by our predecessors. The world over, phenomena are often regarded as what used to be visible before the technological revolution opened up the worlds of the microscopic and electronic sensing devices. Whereas to earlier generations the level of the atom was visualized as grains of sand, the atomic and subatomic levels of today are purely microscopic, even smaller.

> So I do call to witness what you see and what you see not. (Qur'an 69:38-9)

Furthermore, whereas our predecessors understood time as a progression, today's understanding of this phenomenon is in terms of qualitative and classifiable change, and not merely quantitative. This essential difference is at the core of the difference between objective and rational causation, as it was understood in the past, and the scientific causation of the present.

The Islamization of Knowledge must not therefore be understood as idle theorization. Rather, it has come to restore balance to knowledge from the two readings and to liberate human

thought from the enervating clutches of ecclesiasticism and mysticism, on the one hand, and the positivisitic framework for scientific thought which seeks to separate the created from its Creator, on the other. Each of these two extremes has had dreadful consequences for human life and society. The Islamization of Knowledge may be understood as a methodological and paradigmatic introduction to a worldwide societal alternative which aims at delivering not only Muslims from their present crisis, but also all of humankind. Such an undertaking will obviously require a great deal of outstanding study and research, beginning with studies of the Qur'an, and carried out in the light of new understanding and perspectives. This, then, is the responsibility that falls on the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking and the generations required to bring it to fruition.

Without a methodological understanding of the Qur'an, in the framework of its complete and integrative structure, to equal our methodological understanding of natural phenomena and their movement in the framework of their particular structure, the Islamization of Knowledge will remain an impossibility. Moreover, as we attempt to explain the issue to the world, we should expect to be beset by any number of difficulties. Among them is that the present-day intellectual mentality is ill-disposed toward writs purporting to be revelation. In some instances, these may be tolerated by intellectuals, but only to a point. For the most part, however, the sacred and the transcendental are relegated to the domain of personal conviction. As such, then, anything stemming from such literature is scientifically unacceptable. Thus, contemporary knowledge considers the unseen beings referred to in these books, or the accounts they give of the past as contrary to positivistic history and an objective scientific understanding of the world.

Clearly, however, such an understanding is the result of an incomplete grasp of the two readings which has as its goal a comprehension of natural and real-existent phenomena guided by the higher truths of revelation, and not by a reading of these phenomena on their own. The result of a such a one-sided reading will leave us in the realm of positivism and its deconstructed and

relativistic ideas about existence. The danger in such a reading, of course, is that it leads to fragmented and partial thinking rather than to holistic thought. When the two readings are allowed to complement one another, however, a natural progression occurs from the part to the whole, from the qualified to the absolute. Thus, every rejection of what is termed the metaphysical or transcendental is in fact a rejection of the first reading, the natural reading, in God the Creator's name, of revelation. So, the first reading considers the transcendental a fundamental element in its method, not only in view of its being a matter of faith but also as an indicator of a greater universal existence, which is in turn indicated by the second reading or that of the real-existent.

If the world is to emerge from its current crisis of thought and civilization, it needs to comprehend the natural dimensions of existence in their entirety, including the metaphysical dimensions of that existence. Bringing about this awareness, too, is the responsibility of the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking. Such an undertaking is undoubtedly as considerable as it is ambitious. Beginning with the two readings, its goal is no less than Islamizing human knowledge, so that truth may prevail and guidance may become widespread. This, in summary, is a representation of what the Islamization of Knowledge is about. The overall goals of the undertaking may be summarized in what follows.

The First Goal

This may be understood as the restoration of the link between knowledge and values or, more precisely, the return of knowledge to the realm of values following its expulsion by positivism. That the separation of knowledge and values was a perilous mistake is now clear to all of humanity. Any observer of the development of contemporary knowledge will notice that the Western intellectual output in Europe and the United States has begun to show signs of concern, in nearly every discipline, about topics related to knowledge and values. Indeed, postmodernism itself, in certain of its trends, represents this concern; particularly in view of the utter failure of modernism and its uncompromising partition of

knowledge and values. The Islamization of Knowledge undertaking aims at making this issue one of universal concern, by laying out its philosophical and strategic framework, by providing the means necessary to its achievement, and by establishing the guidelines required to connect scholars with truth rather than speculation. Therefore, the efforts expended on theorizing will not be wasted on the attempt to separate knowledge from values, or the self from the subject, but will be concentrated on distinguishing between truth and reality on the one hand and suspicion and supposition on the other. The rule in this case may be derived from the following verse of the Qur'an:

> ...and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. (5:8)

The Second Goal

The second of the undertaking's goals is to bring about interplay and exchange between the two readings, that of revelation and that of the real-existential, in a way which brings about harmony in the universe between humankind and all other forms of creation, all of whom are governed by the same natural laws, *sunan*, and strive toward the same end, to worship their Creator and recite His praise. This will mean that the social and natural sciences will be linked, but not in the way envisaged by the so-called logic of positivism, which holds that the social sciences, in order to be considered true sciences, must be based on the same methodology as the natural sciences. Rather, the Islamization of Knowledge approach is to return both of these fields to a single philosophy which fuses and interacts with the reading of revelation, while at the same time striving to discern the general principles which regulate both sciences. This philosophy, moreover, builds a sound understanding and respect for nature that leads to good treatment and overall benefit rather than the destruction of the environment or the squandering of natural resources as the result of an attitude which indicates that nature must be "conquered" and that the wilderness must be "tamed." On the contrary, the Islamization of Knowledge encourages interaction with nature on the basis of its having been

created in humankind's service, as a trust, and an important factor in humankind's stewardship or *istikhlāf*.

The Third Goal

Finally, the Islamization of Knowledge undertaking seeks to find solutions to the problem of "ends" posited by the static philosophies in which contemporary Western scholarship is mired; philosophies which speak constantly of the "end" of history, or of liberalism, or of the world![11] This is done in order to avoid answering the questions that all manmade philosophies have failed to answer, for the reason that they ignored the element of revelation and were therefore unprepared to answer such questions as: "What is the purpose of the universe?" and "Where will it end?" For its part, Marxism sought to delimit an imaginary end it supposed would occur when true communism would at last overspread the world, so that each human being would work in accordance with his/her abilities and be recompensed each in accordance with his/her needs. Liberal capitalism, however, views its own success as the end of history. The Islamization of Knowledge and the systems and paradigms it proposes are in no way concerned with such theatrical "ends" or imaginary scenarios for the continued existence of humans and their civilization. On the contrary, the undertaking completely negates the idea of "ends" as an intellectual problem, preferring instead to widen its horizons, as the problem of "ends" is one that is wide open and without limits. The Prophet of Allah said: "When the Last Hour comes, and one of you has a seed in his hand, then go ahead and plant it if you can."[12] Evidently, the Prophet meant to emphasize that regardless of the signs and indications, no one should suppose that the end has come, or seek to place a limit on human life and society.

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11. Once such an "end" is seen to have reached its end, the terminology changes to "post-". In either case, however, the emphasis remains the same [trans.].
12. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal related this hadith in his *Musnad*, III, 184, on the authority of Anas ibn Mālik.

This is the Islamization of Knowledge as we understand it, in its present state of development. The call it makes is for a worldwide Islamic cultural and intellectual mobilization to rethink the foundations of human society and rebuild it in order to realize the goal of felicity in both worlds for all of humanity, and to rescue humankind from a future in which destruction looms large. And Allah speaks the truth and guides to what is right!

Our final call is to say: All Praise to Allah, Lord of All the Worlds!

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13- B041 *Resource Mobilization and Investment in an Islamic Economic Framework*. Papers presented to the 3rd International Islamic Economic Seminar. Edited by Zaidi Sattar (1412/1991).

14- B057 *Islam and Economic Development* by M. Umer Chapra. Published jointly with the Islamic Research Institute (Pakistan) (1413/1993).

15- B062 *An Introduction to Islamic Economics* by Muhammad Akram Khan. Published jointly with the Institute of Policy Studies (Pakistan) (1414/1994).

16- B044 *The Education Conference Book: Planning, Implementation, Recommendations and Abstracts of Papers*. Translated from Arabic and edited by Fathi Malkawi and Hussein Abdul-Fattah (1412/1992).

17- B080 *Contributions of Islamic Thought in Contemporary Economics*. Papers presented to the conference, jointly held by IIIT and Al Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt Edited by Misbah Oreibi. (Forthcoming, 1409/1988) .

B. Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought

1- B001 *Trialogue of the Abrahamic Faiths*, Papers presented to the Islamic Studies Group of the American Academy of Religion. Edited by Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī. 2nd edition (1406/1986).

2- B011 *Islamic Awakening: Between Rejection and Extremism* by Yūsuf al Qaraḍāwī. Published jointly with American Trust Publications, 2nd revised edition (1412/1992). Translated from Arabic.

3- *Madīnan Society at the Time of the Prophet*, by Akram Ḍiyā' al 'Umarī. Translated from Arabic.
B026 Volume I: *Its Characteristics and Organization* (1411/1991).
B027 Volume II: *The Jihad Against the Mushrikūn* (1411/1991).
B065 Both volumes in one book (1416/1995).

4- B002 *Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, by Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī 3rd edition (1416/1995).

5- B047 *Ethics of Disagreement in Islam*, by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Awānī, 2nd edition (1417/1996).

7- B006 *Islamic Thought and Culture*. Papers presented to the Islamic Study Group of the American Academy of Religion. Edited by Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī (1402/1982).

8- B003 *Essays in Islamic and Comparative Studies*. Papers presented to the Islaimc Study Group of the American Academy of Religion. Edited by Ismā'īl Rājī al Fārūqī (1402/1982).

9- B081 *Development of Religious Concepts in Muslim Children*. (Forthcoming).

10- B082 *How to Understand and Apply the Sunnah*. By Yūsuf al Qaraḍāwī. (Forthcoming).

11- B050 *Economic Growth and Human Resource Development in an Islamic Perspective*. Proceedings of the Fourth International Islamic Economics Seminar. Edited by Dr. Ehsan Ahmed (1413/1993).

12- B049 *Association of Muslim Social Scientists:* Proceeding of the Twenty First annual Conference. Edited by Muna Abul-Fadl (1413/1993).

13- B066 *Role of Private and Public Sectors in Economic Development in an Islamic Perspective*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Islamic Economics Seminar. Edited by Ehsan Ahmed (1416/1996).

C. Research Monographs

1- B023 *Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence: (Uṣūl al Fiqh al Islāmī)*, by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī, 3rd edition (1413/1993). Translated from Arabic.

2- B022 *Islam and the Middle East: The Aesthetics of a Political Inquiry* by Mona Abul-Fadl (1411/1990).

3- B037 *Sources of Scientific Knowledge: The Concept of Mountains in the Qur'an* by Zaghloul R. El-Naggar (1411/1991).

4- B058 *Indexation of Financial Assets: An Islamic Evaluation* by S. M. Hasanuz Zaman (1413/1993).

5- B070 *The Making of a Religions Discourse: An Essay in the History and Historiography of the 'Abbāsid Revolution* by Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1415/1995).

D. Occasional Papers

1- B019 *Outlines of a Cultural Strategy* by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī. French and German translations available (1410/1989). Translated from Arabic.

2- B035 *Islamization of Knowledge: A Methodology* by 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl. French translation available (1412/1991). Translated from Arabic.

3- B036 *The Qur'an and the Sunnah: The Time-Space Factor* by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī and 'Imād al Dīn Khalīl. Translated from Arabic. French and German translations available (1412/1991).

4- B045 *Ijtihād* by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī. Translated from Arabic. (1413/1993).

5- B055 *Laxity, Moderation and Extremism in Islam* by Aisha Lemu (1414/1994).

6- B059 *Islamization: Reforming Contemporary Knowledge* by 'AbdulḤamīd AbūSulaymān (1414/1994).

7- B061 *Toward Global Cultural Renewal: Modernity and the Episteme of Transcendence* by Mona Abul-Fadl (1416/1995).

8- B060 *The Islamization of Knowledge: Yesterday and Today* by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī. Translated from Arabic. (1416/1995).

9- B079 *Missing Dimensions in Contemporary Islamic Movements* by Ṭāhā Jābir al 'Alwānī. Translated from Arabic. (1417/1996)

16- B053 *Knowledge: An Islamic Perspective* by Bakhtiar Ḥusain Siddiqui (1412/1991).

17- B046 *Islamization of Knowledge: A Critical Overview* by Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr (1413/1992).

E. Human Development

1- B030 *Training Guide for Islamic Workers* by Hisham Altalib, (third revised edition 1413/1993). French, Turkish, Malay, Urdu, Portugese and Arabic translations are available.

2- B083 *Islamic Business Ethics* by Rafik Issa Beekun (Forthcoming 1417/1997).

F. Perspectives on Islamic Thought

1- B024 *National Security and Development Strategy* by Arshad Zaman (1412/1991).

2- B054 *Nationalism and Internationalism in Liberalism, Marxism and Islam* by Tahir Amin (1412/1991).

3- B063 *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihad* by Imran Ahsan Khan Myazee (1416/1995).

G. Islamic Methodology

1- B048 *Crisis in the Muslim Mind* by 'AbdulḤamīd A. Abūsulaymān (1414/1993). Translated from Arabic.

H. Academic Dissertations

1- B051 *Through Muslim Eyes: M. Rashīd Riḍā and the West* by Emad Eldin Shaheen. 2nd edition (1415/1994).

2- B067 *Qur'anic Text: Toward a Methodology of Subject Indexing* by Hānī 'Aṭīyah (1417/1996).

3- B068 *Economic Doctrines of Islam: A Study in the Doctrines of Islam and Their Implications for Poverty, Employment and Economic Growth* by Irfan Ul Haq (1417/1996).

5- B071 *Business Ethics in Islam* by Mushtaq Ahmad (1416/1996).

7- B069 *Teachers Training: An Islamic Perspective* by Zafar Iqbal (1416/1996).

8- B084 *Social Justice in Islam* by Diena 'Abdul Qādir, (Fortcoming, 1417/1997).

7- B085 *The Variant Readings of the Qur'an: A Critical Study of Their Historical and Linguistic Origins* by Ahmad A. M. 'Abd Allah. (Forthcoming, 1417/1997).

7- B086 *Working Principles for an Islamic Model in Mass Communications*, by Suhaib al Barzinji. (Forthcoming, 1417/1997).

7- B087 *Addjudication in the Maliki Madhhab* by Mahammad Fadel. (Forthcoming 1417/1997).

I. Supplementary Social Studies Teaching Units

K- B072A *Kindergarten: I Am a Muslim: A Modern Storybook* by Susan Douglass.

1- B073A *First Grade: Eid Mubarak! Islamic Celebration Around the World* by Susan Douglass.

2- B074A *Second Grade: Muslims in Our Community & Around the World* by Susan Douglass.

3- B075A *Third Grade: Muslim Cities Then & Now* by Susan Douglass.

4- B076A *Fourth Grade: Introduction to Geography: Where in the World Do Muslims Live?* by Susan Douglass.

5- B077A *Fifth Grade: Traders & Explorers in Wooden Ships* by Susan Douglass.

6- B078A *Sixth Grade: Islam & Muslim Civilization* by Susan Douglass.

Journals

AJISS *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (AJISS). A quarterly published jointly with the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), U.S.A.

MWBR *Muslim World Book Review and Index of Islamic Literature*. A quarterly published jointly with the Islamic Foundation (U.K.).

ON THIS BOOK

This paper offers a number of valuable insights gained from a long engagement with Islamic as well as global issues, with traditional as well as contemporary concerns. It not only surveys the field along with the powers and challenges at work, but also charts a way out of the present impasse. More immediately, it offers an updated review of the progress of the Islamization of Knowledge project and a timely clarification of the very concept itself. Clearly, that concept, though responsible for generating worldwide debate and action, has been so often misinterpreted and/or inflated.

The gradational nature of the Islamizing project is all too obvious, and was never far from the minds of the authors of the 1982 declaration. It would certainly have been juvenile to think otherwise. And yet there is a need now to stress, as the present paper does, the ambitious (but also imperative) nature of the enterprise. For, despite the highly commendable effort invested in further elaboration and, in some brave instances, attempted implementation of the concept, the process of the Islamization of Knowledge remains at an intial, some might even say, prenatal stage. Much work needs to be done, many talents galvanized and resources pooled, institutions set up or reorganized, etc., before a truly genuine and sustainable realization of the concept can be said to have begun. Such a realistic vision needs to accompany and inform every stage of the way. To be lulled into a false or premature sense of achievement is a costly setback at a time when standing idly by for a day may have serious consequences for decades to come.